

REMARKS

Claim Objection

Claim 34 is objected to because of the informalities with respect to a term "comprising."

Claim 34 has been amended, and the objection is now moot.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejections

Claims 1-10 and 34-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 1, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The applicant has been asked to show that the subject matter of claims 1-10 and 34-39 is described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the relevant art to make and/use the invention.

More specifically, the Office action suggests that the specification and the claims fail to clearly define what data the applicant means by "data required by" a gaming machine. Claims 1 and 34 have been amended to clearly define that the input data required by one gaming machine are the input data that are necessary to keep the one gaming machine operational. A person skilled in the art will understand that the input data generated and stored in a central database or the input data periodically obtained from the central database and stored in a local database comprise input data for a plurality of gaming machines. Sometimes, only a portion of such input data are required by one specific gaming machine to keep the one gaming machine operational, and therefore, in some embodiments, only that portion of the input data are transmitted to the one gaming machine.

Claims 1, 34, and 38-39 have been further amended to more clearly define features of the invention by using language identical to those expressed in the specification. The applicant respectfully submits that the amendments are supported by the application as originally filed, and an enabling disclosure has been provided for claims 1-10 and 34-39 as illustrated in the following paragraphs (emphasis supplied):

Page 10, paragraph 21:

Referring to Figure 2, a central authority 22 stores the input data for gaming machines and output data from gaming machines 100-106 in a central database 24. A central processing unit (CPU) 26 operates through a network interface 28 and subnetworks 18-19 to enable communication with local data processing units 40 and 60.

Page 11, paragraph 23:

Units 40 and 60 also are designed to store data from database 24 that may be needed by game 100-106. Such data will be readily available for use by the games even if network 18 and 19 are disabled or if central authority is disabled temporarily. As a result of these features, the gaming facility will remain operational even if some of its networks or central authority malfunction.

Page 12, paragraph 24:

Some of the input data in central database 24 also is transmitted over subnetwork 18 to local database 46 and is stored in database 46. On occasion, one of gaming machines 100 and 102 requires transmission of input data stored in local database 46, and the input data is sent to the gaming machine under control of CPU 42.

Page 13, paragraph 26:

Some of the input data in central database 24 also is transmitted over subnetwork 19 to local database 66 and is stored in database 66. On occasion, one of gaming machines 104 and 106 requires transmission of input data stored in local database 66, and the input data is sent to the gaming machine under control of CPU 62.

Page 22, paragraph 46:

The poller uses data required by games 100 and 102 from the local database 46 whenever possible. The poller obtains data relating to balances in player accounts and ticket 138 from the RT database in central database 24 and stores the data in database 46.

Page 27, paragraph 59:

From time-to-time, the input data stored in database 24 may be required by game 100 or game 102. Such data periodically is copied from database 24 and is stored in database 46 by the data mover function of unit 40. For example, the data mover function of unit 40 may retrieve from database 24 ticket, player, meter and jackpot data originating from gaming machines 100 and 102 played within the preceding 36 hours (or another time period) and store the data in database 46. As a result, the data will be readily available for use by gaming machines 100 and 102 even if central authority 22 is temporarily disabled.

Besides “the ticket, player, meter and jackpot data originating from gaming machines 100 and 102 played within the preceding 36 hours (or another time period)” that may be required by a gaming machine. The specification of the present application provides multiple other examples of input data or a portion thereof that may be required by the gaming machines. For example, pages 27-28, paragraph 60 provides:

As another example of input data, database 24 stores credit balances for many players in a table RT-BALANCES. The data mover function of unit 40 copies the RT-BALANCES table from database 24 and stores the data from the table in table L-BALANCES of database 46. When a player uses his club card 152, reader 150 reads the identification code on the card, and the data mover function of unit 40 addresses the credit balance corresponding to the identification code in the RT-BALANCES table of database 46. The player can continue his play with the proper credit reading even if central authority is temporarily disabled. Alternatively, the data mover can retrieve only the portion of the RT-BALANCES table for a predetermined preceding time period, such as 36 hours. As another alternative, the data mover can retrieve only the credit balance for the player whose card is placed in gaming machine 100.

Page 28, paragraph 61:

As another example of input data, database 24 stores a table RT-TICKET of ticket values resulting from printing of tickets like 136 or 138 shown in FIG. 3. The data mover function of unit 40 copies the RT-TICKET table and stores the data from the table in the L-TICKET table of database 46.

Pages 28-29, paragraph 62:

The data mover also obtains from database 24 player name, point and comp balances, groups, preferences, player level, birthday and anniversary day. The data mover then updates the local databases 46 and 66 with this information.

The teachings in the above quoted paragraphs from the specification as originally filed fully support the amendments, and are commensurate in scope with the claimed language. Based on this and other teaching in the specification, a person skilled in the art will understand that the input data required by a gaming machine means those data that are required by the gaming machine from time to time in order to remain operational. The specification has also provided

sufficient disclosure and examples of such input data. Thus, each reference to data required by one of the gaming machines in the claims is supported and enabled by the specification.

In summary, claims 1-10 and 34-39 are in compliance with § 112, first paragraph. The applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection.

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

The Office action maintains the rejection of claims 1-7 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being clearly anticipated by Acres '483 ("Acres"). The Office action further rejects claims 1-10, 21-26, and 34-39 under 35 U.S.C.102(e) as being anticipated by Rowe '907 ("Rowe"). The applicant respectfully traverses the rejections and submits that neither Acres nor Rowe anticipates the subject matter of the amended claim 1, 21, or 34.

Each of the independent claims 1, 21, and 34 has been amended to require that the apparatus or method of the present application (1) polls output data from the gaming machines; (2) transmits the output data to a central database through a local database; (3) periodically obtains input data stored in the central database; (4) stores the input data periodically obtained from the central database in the local database; and (5) when some input data are required by one gaming machine, transmits the required input data that have been periodically obtained from the central database and stored in the local database to the one gaming machine to keep the one gaming machine operational without accessing the central database. In the present application, all output data are sent to the central database for processing, and all input data are from the central database. The local data processing unit comprising the local database does not process output data or generate input data. Another important feature of the subject matter of claim 1, 21 or 34 of the present application is that it enables a gaming facility to remain operational and a

continue his or her play even if the networks between the local data processing units and the central authority are disabled and/or if the central authority is disabled temporarily.

The Acres reference does not describe an apparatus or method as claimed by the present application. The Examiner construes the bank controller 24 of Acres as the claimed second database. The bank controller of the Acres reference comprises a processor that facilitates data communication between the gaming machines in its associated bank and the other components on the network. Acres, col. 3, line 66 to col. 4, line 2. The Acres reference also provides:

The bank controller also includes a CD ROM drive for transmitting digitized sound effects, such as music and the like, to a speaker 26 responsive to commands issued over the network to bank controller 24. The bank controller is also connected to an electronic sign 28 that displays information, such as jackpot amounts and the like, visible to players of machines on bank 16. Such displays are generated and changed responsive to commands issued over the network to bank controller 24. Each of the other banks 18, 20 of EGMs include associated bank controllers, speakers, and signs as shown, which operate in substantially the same manner. * * * Ethernet hub 30 connects each of the bank controllers associated with banks 16, 18, 20 of EGMs to a concentrator 32. Another Ethernet hub 34 connects similar bank controllers (not shown), each associated with an additional bank of EGMs (also not shown), to concentrator 32.

Acres, col. 4, lines 2-18. The Acres reference does not provide any further description of the bank controller.

It is clear that the bank controller of the Acres reference does not (1) periodically obtain data needed by gaming machines from a central authority, (2) store such periodically obtained data in the bank controller, and then (3) transmit such stored data to a gaming machine without accessing the central authority when the data are required by the gaming machine. Therefore, bank controller 24 is not a data processing unit comprising the second database as claimed in claim 1 of the present application, and there is no teaching or suggestion in the Acres reference for such a local data processing unit. Further, there is no teaching or suggestion in the Acres

reference that its system or method can remain operational when the accounting system or server 42, 44, or 46 is disabled or is not accessible temporarily.

The claimed subject matter of claim 1, 21, or 34 of the present application is therefore novel and different from the Acres reference.

The Rowe reference does not described an apparatus or method as claimed by the present application either. The Rowe reference describes a cashless instrument transaction clearinghouse enabling the validation of cashless instruments at a gaming property different from where the cashless instrument was generated. The Examiner construes the clerk validation terminals (CVTs) of the Rowe reference as the claimed second database. The applicant respectfully submits that the CVT or any other device in the cashless instrument transaction clearinghouse of the Rowe reference, which can be, for example, a concentrator, a controller, an EZ Pay server, a cashless server, or a central clearinghouse, is not a local data processing unit comprising a local database as that claimed in the present application.

Claim 1 of the present application requires that the second database periodically obtain input data for the gaming machines from the first database located in a central authority. The local data processing unit comprising the second database (i.e., the local database) of the present application does not process output data from the gaming machines and/or generate input data for the gaming machines. All output data are transmitted to the first database (i.e., the central database) for processing by the central authority, and all input data stored in the local database are periodically obtained from the central database. A CVT in the Rowe reference, on the other hand, obtains output data such as cashless instrument transaction information from gaming machines, process such output data to generate input data for gaming machines, and store the input data in the CVT. When a gaming machine associated with the CVT requires input data, the

CVT sends to the gaming machine the required input data, which are not periodically obtained from a central database, but are either generated by the CVT itself based on the output data from the gaming machines associated with the CVT or obtained from other CVTs in real time.

For example, the Rowe reference teaches:

The CVTs, 60 and 70, store cashless instrument transaction information corresponding to the outstanding cashless instrument, including ticket vouchers, smart cards and debit cards, that are waiting for redemption. The cashless instrument transaction information may be used when the tickets are validated and cashed out or redeemed in some other manner. The CVTs 60 and 70 may store the information for the ticket vouchers printed by the gaming machines connected to the CVT. For example, CVT 60 stores ticket voucher information for ticket vouchers printed by gaming machines 65, 66, 67, 68, and 69. When a ticket is printed out, ticket information is sent to the CVT using a communication protocol of some type from the gaming machine.

In this embodiment, when a player wishes to cash out a ticket, the player may redeem vouchers printed from a particular gaming machine at the CVT associated with the gaming machine or any other CVT which is part of the cashless system associated with the CVT. For example, since CVT 60 and CVT 70 are connected as part of a single cashless system to the EZ pay server 10, a player may redeem vouchers or utilize vouchers at the gaming machines, the CVT's (60 or 70), the cashiers (25, 30, 35, and 40) or the wireless cashiers 58. The CVTs, cashiers, wireless cashiers and gaming machines may be referred to as "cashless validation sites." To cash out the ticket voucher, the ticket voucher is validated by comparing information obtained from the ticket with information stored within the CVT. After a ticket voucher has been cashed out, the CVT marks the ticket paid in a database to prevent a ticket voucher with similar information from being cashed multiple times.

Rowe, col. 8, lines 21-63 (emphasis added). If the ticket voucher to be validated was not printed by a gaming machine associated with that CVT, the CVT will request for validation information in real time from other CVTs connected to the same cashless server, other CVTs connected to the same cross validation network, or from the cashless instrument transaction clearing house communicating with a number of gaming properties. See Rowe, col. 9, lines 5-54.

Therefore, the CVT of the Rowe reference directly process output data from the gaming machines connected to it, and directly generates and stores input data for the gaming machines

based on the output data. Further, the CVT of the Rowe reference does not periodically obtain input data from a central database. When certain input data required by a gaming machine cannot be found in the input data generated by and stored in the CVT based on the output data from the gaming machines connected to the CVT, the CVT will obtain the required input data from other CVTs, the cashless servers, or the cashless instrument transaction clearinghouse in real time. Therefore, the CVT of the Rowe reference does not comprise a local database as that recited in the claims of the present application.

In fact, there is no teaching in the Rowe reference for a local processing unit that (1) periodically obtains data from a central authority, (2) stores such periodically obtained data in a local database, and (3) transmits such periodically obtained data to a gaming machine when they are required by the gaming machine without accessing a central database. None of the devices in a gaming system of the Rowe reference including the CVTs, concentrators, controllers, EZ Pay servers, cashless servers, and the central clearinghouse is such a local processing unit. There is also no teaching or suggestion in Rowe that its system or method can remain operational when its cashless server, cross validation network, or central clearinghouse is disabled temporarily. The claimed subject matter of claim 1, 21, or 34 of the present application is therefore novel and different over the Rowe reference.

For the foregoing reasons, claims 1, 21, and 34 are not anticipated by Acres or Rowe, and are allowable as amended.

Claims 2-10, 22-26, and 35-39 are dependent from claim 1, 21, or 34, and are thus allowable over Acres or Rowe at least for the same reasons as for claim 1, 21 or 34.

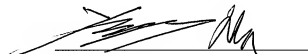
CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, the applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims 1-10, 21-26 and 34-39. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

No fee is believed to be due, but the Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees to the deposit account of McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Ltd., Account No. 13-0017.

Respectfully submitted,
McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Ltd.

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